

News Release

Senator Pete V. Domenici

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 7, 2000

DOMENICI SEEKS \$2.5 MILLION TO SUPPORT E-COMMERCE ALONG SOUTHWEST BORDER

Senator Also Aims to Assist N.M. Businesses Trading with Mexico

WASHINGTON -- Senator Pete Domenici today reported he is seeking up to \$2.5 million in federal funding to support the **Wiring the Border** initiative, a project to help bring e-commerce infrastructure and opportunities to small businesses on the Southwest border.

Domenici, a Senate Appropriations Committee member, is working to include funding to start this project in the FY 2001 Commerce, Justice, State and Judiciary (CJS) Appropriations bill, which the Senate and House will develop this summer.

The Wiring the Border initiative is a joint project developed by the U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with private sector organizations and the U.S. departments of Treasury and Commerce. The project would enable 200 small-and medium-sized businesses to engage in electronic commerce by creating a network of these businesses and five Electronic Commerce Research Centers along the 2,000-mile Southwest border.

"Some of the most exciting growth in our state is taking place along the southern border, and yet the infrastructure for e-commerce opportunities is lacking," Domenici said. "This project would provide the infrastructure and training needed to these companies to engage in e-commerce and make substantial gains for businesses and communities along the Southwest border."

Private businesses have already contributed 200 personal computers to the project, which was recommended in the first annual report of the President's Interagency Task Force on the Economic Development of the Southwest Border. The total cost of the project is \$2.5 million.

Under the initiative, private sector partners will also provide for the installation costs and telephone lines, one year of free Internet service, and support services to go on-line. The project will identify 200 businesses along the border which have the greatest likelihood of increasing sales, revenues, profits and employment if web-enabled by having the basic hardware, software, connectivity, and access to online procurements, credit, capital and business research.

“Much like the Rural Payday initiative, this project will work to bring economic prosperity to rural border areas through the power of e-commerce. It is important that we lay this foundation so that border communities can harness these opportunities,” Domenici said.

Domenici said he is also requesting \$415,000 be included in the bill to complete the **Access Mexico** project, which will provide a technically correct translation of Mexican environmental laws and regulations to aid U.S. businesses trading with Mexico.

“This program will provide invaluable information to American businesses and governments in their dealings with entrepreneurs and government agencies in Mexico. This information is vitally needed by U.S. businesses entering Mexican markets for trade,” Domenici said.

Over the past three years, Congress has provided \$1.2 million within the Commerce Department’s International Trade Administration for a grant to the U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce to compile the Access Mexico project. The Chamber needs the \$415,000 to complete the project, bring the regulation database on-line, and train users.

Also of interest to New Mexico, Domenici is also supporting the following funding of interest to southern New Mexico:

- **\$400,000 for the International Boundary and Water Commission**: Funding to conduct a feasibility study of in-channel and flood plain habitat restoration projects for the Rio Grande River from Elephant Butte Dam to Fort Quitman. This project is associated with the El Paso-Las Cruces Regional Sustainable Water Project, a regional cooperative effort among New Mexico and Texas entities for conversion of surface waters of the Rio Grande from irrigation to municipal use.
- **\$750,000 for the New Mexico Cooperative Extension Service 4-H Youth Development program**: Funding to continue the program, which provides after-school services targeted at an estimated 175,000 New Mexico youth who are home alone or unsupervised between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. during the week. The ultimate goal is for this program to operate in all 33 New Mexico counties, using the 4-H youth development model as the program structure.
- **\$9 million for the Southwest Border States Anti-Drug Information System**: Funding to continue the Anti-Drug Information System, which has established a successful network to collect and share criminal information along the Southwest Border States.
- **\$200,000 for the Rio Grande Canalization Project**: Funding for the International Boundary and Water Commission to continue environmental compliance activities associated with construction of the Rio Grande Canalization Project between the American Dam in El Paso, Texas and the Caballo Dam in New Mexico.

- **\$500,000 for the U.S.-Mexico Conflict Resolution Center:** Funding to continue support for the center, based at New Mexico State University. The center provides education, training and services in alternative dispute resolution to commercial concerns operating along the Southwest border. The Conflict Resolution Center has developed, in partnership with Mexico, mechanisms to resolve commercial disputes through arbitration and mediation rather than legal action.
- **\$7.5 million for New Mexico Tech Counter Terrorism:** Funding for the New Mexico Institute for Mining and Technology to continue its work as a partner of the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium, which trains first responders to respond to potential acts of domestic terrorism. New Mexico Tech has trained First Responders from 66 jurisdictions, with course work focusing on understanding and recognizing terrorist events and defense consideration for biological, nuclear, incendiary, chemical, and explosive incidents.

Domenici stressed that his request is only the first step in the congressional appropriations process. The Senate and House will aim to complete all 13 of the FY2001 appropriations bills to fund the federal government by the Oct. 1 start of the 2001 fiscal year.